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# A Savior of Our City

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# University of Dayton, Ohio (url: <http://www.udayton.edu/index.php>)



## A Savior of Our City

**10.12.2009 | President, Campus and Community** The University of Dayton is singled out as the "most innovative of all engaged colleges and universities" nationally in a new survey of the nation's top 25 universities helping to save America's cities from blight.

The University of Dayton is tied for No. 2 overall and ranked No. 1 among Catholic universities in the 2009 "Saviors of Our Cities" ranking announced today by Evan Dobelle, president of Westfield State College, at the Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities annual conference in Philadelphia. The University ranked No. 3 overall in the first "Saviors of Our Cities" survey in 2006.

The list's 25 academic institutions were selected because of their positive impact on their urban communities, Dobelle said, including both commercial and residential activities such as revitalization, cultural renewal, economics, and community service and development. An additional 100 institutions are recognized on an honor roll.

"We have seen a major shift in our national economy, and many U.S. cities that once depended on corporations and large populations are struggling to survive," said University of Dayton President Daniel J. Curran. "Higher education must take the lead and bring a sense of urgency and willingness to engage their communities and regard revitalization as mission-central. Our passion for this work springs from a central tenet of our Catholic, Marianist identity -- a powerful belief in community."

The "Saviors of Our Cities" ranking described the University of Dayton as "perhaps the most innovative of all engaged colleges and universities. Its community involvement is steeped in the university's Catholic, Marianist tradition of community charity and support, as well as civic leadership. The University's Fitz Center for Leadership in Community embodies this commitment to 'faith and justice' and its creative partnering around local environmental issues captures the positive spirit of engagement. The University of Dayton's great lesson of engagement is that mutually beneficial partnerships between institutions of higher learning and their communities are based on the social capital created through respect and the sharing of assets."

Dobelle used 11 criteria to rank the schools on the list. These included the institutions' longstanding involvement, dollars invested by the universities, faculty and student involvement in community service, sustainability of neighborhood initiatives and the effect on local student access and affordability to attend college through K-12 partnerships.

"The University's role in Dayton is that of facilitative leader, and the Fitz Center builds community around important ideas and issues," said Dick Ferguson, director of the Fitz Center. "The University and the city need each other. Our histories are linked and our futures are interdependent."

Here is a sampling of the University of Dayton's community revitalization efforts:

- Located on campus, the Dayton Early College Academy for urban public high school students is the only charter school sponsored by a Catholic university. All of the school's graduates have enrolled in college, many of them as the first in their families.
- The University purchased more than 50 acres of former factory land including some designated as a brownfield and with the help of state and federal funds is cleaning it up and preparing it for economic development. It's now the most developable land in the city.
- Through the Fitz Center for Leadership in Community, the University is working with community partners to reestablish schools as neighborhood centers following the end of court-ordered busing for desegregation.
- The Fitz Center is a leader connecting students with the life of the community outside the campus. The Dayton Civic Scholars inspires students to work in the public and nonprofit sectors.
- The Rivers Institute, also part of the Fitz Center, brings area jurisdictions together around the common interest of the Great Miami River system and, as a program led by students, gives graduates a reason to stay in the region. The institute recently received a \$180,000 grant to develop a multidisciplinary curriculum geared to nurturing new civic leaders, committed to the community and its rivers and natural assets.
- Ohio officially designated the Dayton region as Ohio's Aerospace Hub and named the University of Dayton as the lead partner because of its strengths in aerospace-related research and technology-based economic development.

- The University of Dayton-led Institute for Development and Commercialization of Advanced Sensor Technology (IDCAST) is the first tenant in Tech Town, the Dayton region's technology-oriented district. In two and a half years, IDCAST has helped start three companies and 250 jobs.

The schools from one to 25 are: the University of Southern California (1); University of Pennsylvania (1); University of Dayton (2); University of Pittsburgh (2); Indiana University/Purdue University at Indianapolis (5); Creighton University; Case Western Reserve University; Tulane University; Portland State University; Drexel University; Virginia Commonwealth University; University of Louisville; University of Rochester; University of Houston; University of Missouri at Kansas City; University of Missouri at St. Louis; Emory University; University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee; Carnegie Mellon University; Rhode Island School of Design; Miami-Dade College; St. Louis University; Rutgers-Newark, State University of New Jersey; George Washington University; University of Nebraska-Omaha.

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